

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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R 020757Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6965

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2122

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDIP PFOR LA CH TH UR EG

SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR'S VIEWS DURING FAREWELL CALLS IN LAOS

SUMMARY: EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND AND LAOS WAS TOLD BY SOVIET OFFICIAL IN BANGKOK THAT SOVIET INTEREST IN LAOS IS LIMITED TO BALANCING PRC INFLUENCE. EGYPTIANS PLAN TO SEND A RESIDENT AMBASSADOR TO VIENTIANE. END SUMMARY.

1. EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TO THAILAND AND LAOS, MOUSTAFA F. EL-ESSAWI, HAS RESIDED IN BANGKOK FOR FIVE YEARS BUT WILL BE RETURNING TO CAIRO IN THE NEAR FUTURE TO ASSUME A POSITION ON THE PRESIDENT'S BOARD. ON HIS MOST RECENT TRIP TO VIENTIANE BEGINNING AUGUST 30, EL-ESSAWI DISCUSSED FOLLOWING POINTS WITH EMBOFF:

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2. A SOVIET OFFICIAL IN BANGKOK TOLD EL-ESSAWI THAT

SOVIET INTEREST IN LAOS IS LIMITED TO BALANCING PRC INFLUENCE. THE SOVIETS HAVE LITTLE ECONOMIC INTEREST IN LAOS AND NO DESIRE FOR LONG TERM INVESTMENTS. THE SOVIET SAID THAT USSR, UNLIKE THE U.S., IS UNABLE TO SPEND MONEY LAVISHLY ON AID TO LAOS, BUT HE ANTICIPATED THE USSR WOULD BE FORTHCOMING WITH AID TO LAOS AS LONG AS THE PRC MAINTAINED AN AID PRESENCE.

3. EL-ESSAWI FELT THAT THE SOVIETS WERE PLEASED WITH THE VIETNAMESE PRESENCE IN LAOS AND THAT THEY ENCOURAGED THE VIETNAMESE TO SUPPORT THE LPDR IN ORDER TO BALANCE PRC INFLUENCE. HE THOUGHT, HOWEVER, THAT THE VIETNAMESE WERE PRIMARILY CONCERNED WITH INTERNAL DEVELOPMENT AND WERE RELUCTANT TO DIVERT TOO MANY OF THEIR RESOURCES TO LAOS. EL-ESSAWI REFERED TO THE SOVIETS AS "IMPERIALISTS". HE FELT THAT THE VIETNAMESE ARE JUSTIFIABLY SKEPTICAL OF SOVIET MOTIVES AND THAT THE VIETNAMESE WOULD LIKE TO STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE PRC AND SOVIETS.

4. EL-ESSAWI TOLD EMBOFF THAT THE LAO HAD GIVEN AGREEMENT FOR A NEW EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR WHO WILL BE RESIDENT IN VIENTIANE. THE NEW AMBASSADOR, WHOM EL-ESSAWI DID NOT NAME, IS COMING FROM A POST IN AFRICA AND HAS NO PREVIOUS ASIAN EXPERIENCE. EL-ESSAWI REMARKED THAT THE LAO SEEMED VERY PLEASED WITH THE EGYPTIAN MOVE TO ESTABLISH A RESIDENT AMBASSADOR AND HAVE AGREED TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING A CHANCERY AND RESIDENCE.

5. INASMUCH AS EGYPT HAS NO ECONOMIC OR COMMERICAL INTERESTS IN LAOS, EL-ESSAWI SAID THAT IT DOES NOT INTEND TO GIVE THE LPDR ECONOMIC AID. HE MENTIONED TO EMBASSYOFFICER THE VAGUE POSSIBLILITY OF PROVIDING SEVERAL SCHOLARSHIPS FOR LAO STUDENTS TO STUDY IN EGYPT. HOWEVER, HE HAS LEFT THIS MATTER FOR THE NEW AMBASSADOR TO DISCUSS WITH THE LPDR.

6. AMBASSADOR EL-ESSAWI SAID THAT THE LPDR FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD HAD DIFFICULTIES ARRANGING AN APPOINTMENT FOR HIM TO CALL ON PRIME MINISTER KAYSONE PHOMVIHAN
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BECAUSE HIS THREE DAY VISIT COINCIDED WITH THAT OF THE VIETNAMESE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER LE THANH NGHI. LAST MONTH EL-ESSAWI HAD INFORMED THE LAO THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO PAY A VISIT TO VIENTIANE BEFORE HE RETURNED HOME IN OCTOBER. THE LPDR SUGGESTED THAT EL-ESSAWI COME TO LAOS ON AUGUST 30. FOREIGN MINISTRY CABINET DIRECTOR SOUBANH SRITHIRATH APOLOGIZED TO EL-ESSAWI FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO GIVE HIM MORE ATTENTION BECAUSE HIS VISIT

COINCIDED WITH THAT OF VIETNAMESE DELEGATION, WHICH
SOUBANH SAID ARRIVED WITH VERY LITTLE ADVANCE NOTICE.
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